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Chairman: Mr. Balarezo ..... (Peru)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 83: Macroeconomic policy questions (*continued*)

(b) International financial system and development

(c) External debt crisis and development

Draft resolutions A/C.2/59/L.2 and L.3

1. **Mr. Al-Mahmoud** (Qatar) introduced draft resolutions A/C.2/59/L.2 and A/C.2/59/L.3 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The first was based on the consensus in the international community on ways and means of finding new resources for development to complement official development assistance and also dealt with the transfer of financial resources and the need for the developing countries to have a greater say in the international financial institutions. Draft resolution A/C.2/59/L.3 dealt with the need fully to implement the commitments made in the Habitat Agenda, the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, especially those related to water, sanitation and slums. It also dealt with the need urgently to address the issue of funding for UN-Habitat, and particularly the need to increase non-earmarked contributions on a multi-year basis. Finally, it highlighted the important role of UN-Habitat in humanitarian work and the need for cooperation and coordination with other organizations of the United Nations system.

Agenda item 84: Follow-up to and implementation of the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.2/59/L.4

2. **Mr. Al-Mahmoud** (Qatar) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/59/L.4 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Agenda item 86: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and of the twenty-fifth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.2/59/L.5

3. **Mr. Al-Mahmoud** (Qatar) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/59/L.5 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Agenda item 85: Sustainable development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

(b) Further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

(c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

(d) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind

(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

(f) Convention on Biological Diversity

(g) United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

General debate (continued)

4. **Mr. Deutz** (Observer for the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)), welcoming the Committee's review of the work of the Convention on Biological Diversity, said that the seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in Kuala Lumpur in February 2004 had made considerable progress in important aspects that were of relevance to the Committee. The sixth Meeting in The Hague had endorsed the target of achieving by 2010 a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss at global,

regional and national levels as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth. The seventh Meeting had stressed the linkages between that target and the Millennium Development Goals on environmental sustainability and poverty eradication. It had developed a framework of targets and indicators providing a road map for action by Parties to achieve the 2010 target, which could be useful in assessing progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. The Union supported the recommendation of the Conference of the Parties that the establishment of the 2010 target be explored as a milestone towards achieving the Millennium Development Goal on environmental sustainability.

5. The Meeting had also adopted a comprehensive and ambitious programme of work on protected areas, which included the targets of establishing the global network of representative and effectively managed protected area systems by 2010 for terrestrial areas and 2012 for marine areas. The Union called on the Committee to emphasize the importance of effective implementation of the programme of work on protected areas for achievement of the Johannesburg commitments and the Millennium Development Goals. The seventh Meeting had addressed the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity and, more specifically, the serious threats to marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The decisions taken at the meeting encouraged the development of national frameworks for marine and coastal biodiversity. They had also identified new challenges, which included the need to increase knowledge of marine genetic resources, ensure their conservation and sustainable use, and equitably share the benefits derived from their utilization. The General Assembly should advance consideration of those biodiversity conservation issues that would include discussion of scientific, technical and legal aspects. The seventh Meeting had also addressed the question of developing an international regime to safeguard the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources, and had defined a negotiation process by establishing detailed terms of reference for the Ad Hoc Working Group on Access and Benefit Sharing.

6. The current international agenda provided an unprecedented opportunity to build effective linkages between the environmental, economic and social pillars of sustainable development. Political commitment and action by all was needed to address the challenges that lay ahead in the achievement of the Johannesburg and Millennium Assembly commitments. The Union was contributing through its Species Survival Commission and Species Information Service. In a joint project with Conservation International and NatureServe, it had completed a Global Amphibian Assessment, which analysed all known amphibian species in order to assess their conservation and distribution. The Union was building awareness of the 2010 target, including through its "Countdown to 2010" initiative in Europe.

7. **Mr. Triamjangarun** (Thailand), referring to document A/59/25, said that his country fully supported the preparation of a draft intergovernmental strategic plan for technology support and capacity-building in order to develop an action-oriented plan with a specific timetable and sufficient resources for UNEP to assist developing countries. The report in document A/59/220 indicated encouraging progress in pursuing sustainable development at national, regional and international levels. His country was fully committed to implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in particular the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and its ministries and government agencies had incorporated Agenda 21 in their relevant programmes and projects, including the five-year national economic and social development plans.

8. He commended the regional commissions, and particularly the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and relevant United Nations funds and programmes for their assistance to developing countries in implementing their environmental goals and objectives, particularly those set out in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Thailand, which had ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity in October 2003, attached great importance to the issues of access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing. In addition, the current rate of biodiversity loss was of particular concern to developing countries. Thailand would be hosting the forthcoming third IUCN World Conservation Congress, which would present the most comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date evidence on the state of biodiversity on the planet.

9. **Mr. Shin Boo-Nam** (Republic of Korea) welcomed the productive results of the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which paved the way for an effective policy session in 2005.

The new type of meeting format would be a key foundation for future initiatives. The thirteenth session would be the first policy session to decide policy options and to undertake practical measures, and it was essential that organization of its work be concluded as soon as possible. During the thirteenth session, attention might be given to setting guidelines for priorities among the various policy options, taking into account each country's specific circumstances.

10. His delegation supported in principle the UNEP Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building, which it hoped would be beneficial to developing countries and an incentive for developed countries. The Plan should prioritize human resources development and technological cooperation among nations; for it to be successful, developed countries should continue to provide support in a coherent manner and developing countries must continue to improve their institutional frameworks in order to utilize assistance in the best possible way. A true partnership between developed and developing countries was essential. It was vital to encourage regional cooperation and partnership among adjacent countries with similar cultural backgrounds. His Government would be hosting the ESCAP Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Seoul in March 2005.

11. **Mr. Tekle** (Eritrea) said that, since land degradation was a pernicious and widespread problem facing his country, it attached great importance to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and welcomed the decision of the Council and Assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to include land degradation as an additional focal area. His Government had a National Action Programme to combat desertification and the effects of drought, which provided an overview of land degradation in Eritrea, including a comprehensive list of contributory factors and practical measures to address the problem as well as the financial, institutional and human resources required for implementation. His Government, which considered poverty eradication in both urban and rural areas an essential precondition for sustainable development, endorsed the decisions and recommendations of the numerous international conferences and summits on the matter.

12. The conservation of biodiversity was also high on Eritrea's development priorities. Eritrea had signed and ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1996 and had immediately taken the necessary measures to formulate a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. The Plan recognized three core areas — terrestrial, marine and agricultural biodiversity.

13. Successful sustainable development plans required massive mobilization of resources as well as capacity-building, including allocation of financial resources, training of manpower and strengthening of institutions. Human resources development had been identified as the most significant constraint on growth and sustainable development in Eritrea. Developed countries must honour the commitments made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development to extend adequate technical, technological and financial assistance to the developing countries to enable them to overcome the challenges facing them in their efforts to achieve sustainable development.

14. **Mr. Song Se Il** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) noted that environmental degradation and poverty were caused not only by natural factors, such as climate change, but also by socio-economic factors that militated against sustainable development and protection of the environment. It was essential to assist developing countries in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. Yet international commitments in that regard were not fully implemented because of the political strings attached to assistance and the unequal relationship between providers and beneficiaries.

15. Developed countries should assume their historic responsibility and work towards the sustainable development of developing countries. The top priority was strengthening the internal capacity of the developing countries. It was also necessary to pay considerable attention to water, sanitation and human settlements. Accordingly, his delegation welcomed the decision by the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to give priority to water, sanitation and human settlements for its work in 2004-2005. Despite its economic difficulties, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would continue to focus its efforts on land management and protection of the environment so as to achieve a stable and sustainable livelihood for its people and would actively join in the international community's efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

16. **Ms. Filippini** (Haiti) welcomed the widespread interest shown by Governments, international organizations and civil society in environmental issues.

17. Despite the efforts of the international community to mitigate the effects of natural disasters, they still had a devastating effect in terms of the threat to the environment and the loss of human lives. Haiti had been devastated by floods during 2004, and her delegation wished to express its thanks to the States and organizations that had demonstrated their solidarity with her country. The measures in the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World must be implemented as a matter of urgency. There was a close relationship between environmental degradation and the risk of and vulnerability to natural disasters. Early warning strategies should be people-oriented in order to maximize accuracy and response capacity. Local communities should be given a key role in designing, implementing and assessing disaster-reduction and risk-management strategies.

18. As desertification advanced in many areas, so did the flow of migrants deprived of water and other life-sustaining resources. Thus, desertification led to food insecurity, famine and poverty and undermined the sustainable development of many countries. Her delegation therefore attached great importance to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which could reduce the vulnerability of States to climate change and biodiversity loss and contribute to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

19. Despite the difficulties faced by Haiti's institutions and its economy, the Government had not lost sight of the fact that the right to health care and to education in a healthy environment were fundamental human rights. It attached priority to strengthening its national capacity to respond to natural disasters and improve the environment, which had been seriously damaged as a result of recent natural disasters. Unfortunately, the sustainable development initiatives undertaken by Haiti and other developing countries were often limited by scarcity of resources, geographical isolation and poor coordination. To correct that situation, the regional and global mechanisms put in place for the implementation of Agenda 21 should be strengthened, and a viable partnership mechanism should be set up on the basis of regional and global commitments. The partnership mechanism should include governments, financing agencies, non-governmental organizations and local organizations. Disaster prevention was crucial to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the Barbados Programme of Action. Her delegation urged the international community to honour its commitments to provide stable and adequate financial support to the United Nations in order to enable it to support the efforts of Governments and draw up effective programmes to meet actual needs.

20. Mr. Noghès (Monaco) said that his Government was strongly committed to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, Agenda 21 and the documents adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. It had been involved with Mediterranean, West African and sub-Saharan States in environmental conservation through marine and coastal environmental protection measures and partnerships for air pollution control in the cities or reforestation to combat desertification. His delegation welcomed the cooperation efforts of the secretariats of United Nations environmental conventions and the International Meeting for the 10-Year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action in 2005 and the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in Japan.

21. His Government had greatly increased the level of its official development assistance during the previous two years to advance the implementation of Agenda 21. The international community must show its determination at the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to overcome obstacles, including those preventing integrated water resources management. The regional commissions had a vital role to play, and his Government was very involved in the work of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development.

22. At the national level, the Government of Monaco sought to improve the quality of the marine environment and air quality, particularly through sulphur emissions reduction, and water management. It also worked with domestic non-governmental organizations in the areas of humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. His Government, which promoted educational programmes in schools in Monaco and abroad to raise awareness of sustainable development issues, welcomed the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Lastly, as a member of the Executive Board of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

23. Ms. Navarro (Cuba), stressing the importance of achieving the goals of the Johannesburg Plan of

Implementation, said that the developing countries still faced many obstacles, particularly with regard to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals relating to access to drinking water and sanitation and improvement of the living conditions of slum dwellers.

24. Every year, natural disasters caused millions of dollars worth of losses throughout the world. The Caribbean region had recently been devastated by hurricanes, and recovery would be slow and costly. Environmental degradation was both a cause and a consequence of the increasing frequency of such destructive phenomena. Economic growth and sustainable development would not be possible unless appropriate measures were taken to reduce the losses caused by natural disasters. Underdeveloped countries must have free and timely access to the technologies needed to prevent natural disasters and mitigate their effects. It was therefore important to strengthen the capacity and leadership of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, which was coordinating efforts in that area.

25. Another round of informal consultations prior to the International Meeting in Mauritius had recently been concluded. Despite some progress, serious differences remained with regard to the way that developed countries perceived the problems and vulnerabilities of small States. The lack of financial resources, technology and capacity mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General should be considered in the implementation section of the document to be issued at the International Meeting. The support offered to small island developing States would be of little use in the absence of a fair and equitable multilateral trading system, a far-reaching reform of the international financial architecture and a system of relations between States based on development, peace and international security rather than on conflict and unilateral economic sanctions.

26. The thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development would provide another opportunity to move forward with the development agenda initiated in Johannesburg.

27. **Mr. Montealegre** (Philippines) said that conserving the world's endangered biodiversity resources required measures to protect the environment, better education, capacity-building, increased research, government support and international cooperation. Noting that about three quarters of the genetic diversity of agricultural crops had been lost over the last century and that 1,350 of the 6,300 animal breeds were endangered or already extinct, he stressed the need to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss, promote the sustainable use of biodiversity and address the major threats to it.

28. His delegation welcomed and supported the initiatives of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and their leading role in international biodiversity issues. The Philippines was committed to achieving by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national levels as a contribution to poverty alleviation and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. However, much more needed to be done to meet that target. His delegation welcomed the offer of the Government of Brazil to host the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and urged those delegations that had not already signed and ratified the Convention to do so and accede to the instrument as soon as possible in order to make it universal. His delegation also welcomed the steps taken by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to promote closer collaboration with other treaty bodies and concerned international organizations.

29. **Mr. Latheef** (Maldives) said that, while the Barbados Programme of Action was at the forefront of the development efforts of all small island developing States, there was a limit to what those States could do on their own. A number of those States, including his country, were still struggling to achieve sustainable development, with the real threat of environmental catastrophe looming over them. If current global environmental trends continued, it was estimated that nearly 60 per cent of the world's coral reefs would be lost in the next 20 to 40 years, half of the Earth's forests would be destroyed and desertification and land degradation would threaten nearly one quarter of the land surface of the globe.

30. Indeed, unless swift remedial measures were implemented, human existence would be threatened. The frequency of natural disasters around the world demonstrated the urgent need to tackle environmental issues on a global scale. Many small island developing States suffered disproportionately from such disasters owing to their geophysical characteristics, underscoring their environmental vulnerability. The

recent devastation of Grenada by a hurricane showed how vulnerable small island developing States could be to environmental disasters.

31. Achievements over the past decade had been far less than expected. In order to halt and reverse environmental degradation, the international community must not only pledge urgent action but must also be ready to convert pledges into deeds by mustering the political will and channelling the necessary resources to ensure that the commitments made in Barbados were translated into practical action.

32. His country was grateful to its development partners for their support for its efforts to achieve sustainable development and expected the entire international community to honour its commitments and join with small island developing States in a true partnership. The forthcoming international meeting in Mauritius would afford another opportunity to address the global concern for the environment and for the international community to rededicate itself to the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

33. **Mr. Nteturuye** (Burundi) said that demographic pressure coupled with an unprecedented socio-political crisis, leading to abject poverty, had exerted extraordinary pressure on Burundi's natural resources, especially land. Corrective measures must be taken without delay in order to avert an ecological disaster. Accordingly, his Government was preparing a national programme to combat land degradation and welcomed the support provided by the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Burundi also welcomed the decision by the World Bank, in collaboration with the Convention secretariat, to include Burundi in the list of countries for the pilot phase of the TerrAfrica concept. His delegation had considerable hopes for the success of that initiative, whose ultimate goal was to invest heavily in sustainable land management in sub-Saharan Africa.

34. Noting the interrelationship between poverty, land degradation and living conditions in rural areas, where subsistence agriculture was the main source of livelihood for the poor, he said that his delegation supported all initiatives to provide resources for the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. While he welcomed the decision of the Conference of the Parties to make GEF its funding mechanism, he stressed the need to diversify sources of financing, including through the OPEC Fund for International Development, and encouraged the Secretariat to take the appropriate measures. The next GEF replenishment should increase the funding earmarked for combating land degradation. Lastly, he urged the secretariats of the three conventions arising from the Earth Summit to give priority to Burundi in their interventions because of its particularly precarious situation.

35. **Mr. Dembélé** (Mali), stressing the connection between environmental issues and sustainable development, said that the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification should be given a prominent place in the review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals to be carried out in 2005. The Government of Mali did not believe desertification was inevitable; its environmental protection plan had led to a number of institutional, legislative and regulatory reforms. In addition to implementing measures to prevent brush fires, Mali had drawn up a forestry policy and a national plan to combat desertification and had conducted a review of its forestry legislation. Local communities had been given greater responsibility for managing their environment and their natural resources, and infrastructure works had been built to control erosion and sedimentation.

36. Mali had participated actively in regional and international forums on environmental questions and welcomed the proclamation of 2006 as the International Year of Deserts and Desertification and the holding in April 2004 of the Summit of the Heads of State of the Niger Basin Authority to discuss the problem of sedimentation of the Niger River.

37. The interesting proposal to convert the United Nations Environment Programme into the United Nations environment organization merited further study. Faced with widening gaps within and between nations, the international community must promote a global partnership for sustainable development. His delegation welcomed the decision of the Conference of the Parties to designate the Global Environment Facility as a financing mechanism of the Convention to Combat Desertification. He called on the international community to increase the resources made available at the fourth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility Trust Fund in order to ensure that land degradation and desertification received due attention.

38. **Mr. Sermoneta** (Israel) said that his Government was pleased with the outcome of the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and hoped that the forthcoming session would help to promote Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Israel was preparing to join the Commission in April 2005 and looked forward to sharing its expertise in sustainable development. The International Meeting for the 10-Year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was an important opportunity to review progress and provide further blueprints for the future. Small island developing States had always been a major concern of his Government, which would be following the International Meeting closely to match the priorities set with those of Israel's national development assistance programme. Such States were particularly vulnerable to climate change and biodiversity loss, and his Government stood ready to offer its assistance and expertise on those issues.

39. The Yokohama Strategy illustrated an important intersection between the issues facing small island developing States and disaster reduction. The international community must foster a programme that provided the greatest possible assistance to those States for disaster avoidance and relief to promote their development. Natural disasters hindered the development goals of the small island developing States considerably.

40. The risks posed by climate change, desertification and biodiversity loss made the world more dangerous and hampered progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. His delegation noted with satisfaction the continuing efforts of the Joint Liaison Group and supported further strengthening of the synergies of the environmental conventions. His Government had voluntarily undertaken activities to restrict or reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Israel's strategy for sustainable energy included facilitating and expediting the move to natural gas, advancing energy conservation and promoting alternative and renewable energy sources.

41. Israel had dealt successfully with desertification for decades. Extensive afforestation projects had apparently arrested soil erosion and promoted the rehabilitation of vegetation and restoration of water-related ecosystem services, mainly in the dry subhumid regions. The knowledge gained might help other regions in the world. Lastly, the umbrella issue of sustainable development included many environmental issues that must be addressed to maintain, rehabilitate and sustain a sometimes overburdened planet.

42. **Mr. Chidyausiku** (Zimbabwe) said that the most difficult challenge facing developing countries had always been how to achieve sustainable development against the backdrop of a faltering economy, massive poverty, food insecurity, foreign currency shortages, negative balances of payments, high unemployment and recurrent droughts and other natural disasters. The Earth Summit and Agenda 21 have given great hope, however, to most of the developing countries, and Zimbabwe had wasted no time in incorporating the recommendations of the Rio Conference into its domestic programmes.

43. Since ratifying the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, his Government had made much progress in promoting sustainable development through a national strategy with the core objective of poverty eradication. Zimbabwe's national action programme sought to promote the sustainable use of natural resources by addressing the environmental and social and economic factors that contributed to desertification. It did so through community-driven projects financed by the Government or funding arrangements with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, including the private sector and local authorities. The national action programme also served as a platform for implementation of the conventions related to sustainable development such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and Convention on Climate Change. His Government therefore supported the Global Environmental Facility, which it hoped would be an additional source of funds for its programmes.

44. Poverty-related problems were the greatest challenge to sustainable development, particularly in rural areas. His Government had therefore embarked on a land redistribution exercise to relieve congestion in overcrowded areas and prepared an integrated conservation plan to promote poverty eradication and regeneration of the environment. Food self-sufficiency and food security were key elements in that plan. Steps had also been taken to develop irrigation infrastructure, including the provision of clean and safe water.

45. His Government had enacted environmental legislation that provided for environmental

management standards and a national environmental fund. It was important to integrate gender equality issues into any poverty eradication and environmental management programme. Lastly, HIV/AIDS had had a big impact on all development and environmental protection programmes as it had affected the able-bodied, diverted resources and left orphans in the care of elderly people, thus creating a huge dependency problem.

46. **Mr. Gospodinov** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that the item under consideration had two interconnected aspects: the connection between sustainable development and risk reduction and the particular vulnerability of small island developing States. A number of upcoming conferences focused on those issues, including the World Conservation Congress of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, the World Conference on Disaster Reduction and the 10-Year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action.

47. Any discussion of the economic and social status of small island developing States must take into account their vulnerability, and any dialogue must involve the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, which were often the only bodies with community outreach programmes throughout a given country. In addition, the Federation's community risk reduction strategies fitted well into national development planning.

48. The Federation had sought to highlight the importance of the World Summit on the Information Society for advancing the sustainable development objectives of small island developing States. The Federation, the Tunisian Red Crescent Society and other concerned organizations were working on a project to alleviate the difficulties experienced by remote villages in southern Tunisia, which might be applied to other regions. Telemedicine was a rapidly expanding public health asset for remote communities. The Government of Iceland and the States members of the Arctic Council had contributed greatly to that effort in coordination with the national societies of that region. The Federation was committed to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Following the recent hurricanes, which had severely damaged the Caribbean and the southern United States of America, the work of the Red Cross teams in the field had proved to be vital once again.

49. There was a need to increase understanding about the relationship between sustainable development and strong communities. The involvement of local communities in the design and implementation of programmes oriented towards the most vulnerable was necessary. The links between the Millennium Development Goal on sustainable development and the Goal on poverty reduction must be made clearer. Lastly, special attention should be paid to the theme of community resilience, as it was the foundation of meaningful work on sustainable development.

50. **Mr. Carpio** (Observer for the Association of Caribbean States (ACS)), after reviewing the history of the Association, recalled that, at the Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Barbados Programme of Action), it had been decided to ask the United Nations General Assembly to recognize the Caribbean Sea area as a Special Area. Subsequently, in Venezuela, the Heads of State and/or Government of the Association of Caribbean States had reiterated that the Caribbean Sea was the common patrimony of the region and had decided to pursue their initiative concerning the Caribbean Sea area. It was particularly discouraging that those efforts had not received the necessary support, since the Rio Earth Summit had recognized the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

51. The original proposal had recognized that large maritime areas were under the jurisdiction of coastal States; thus, the countries of the Greater Caribbean, particularly the small island developing States, would have authority over maritime areas that were sometimes larger than their own land areas. However, they lacked the financial, human and institutional resources they would need to safeguard their rights and meet their obligations. Consequently, the members of ACS had proposed a multilateral framework that would enable those countries to fulfil their new rights and duties.

52. By failing to recognize the special area as outlined in the original draft, the international community had failed to recognize that the Caribbean Sea was a fragile ecosystem shared by countries and territories of different sizes and levels of development which depended on the sea for their economic development. It had also failed to recognize the limitations — economic, social, legal and

environmental — that the countries of the Greater Caribbean faced in their effort to safeguard that patrimony.

53. From the operational standpoint, the title of the General Assembly resolutions adopted since 1997 suggested a clear emphasis on resource management while ignoring development issues, thus placing the burden of maintaining the integrity of the Caribbean Sea area on those countries that were least prepared to carry it, even though they were not the only ones using the Sea. During the current session of the General Assembly, the ACS countries would again submit a proposal for an integrated approach to the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea that recognized its importance for the peoples of the Greater Caribbean and not just for the marine environment, which was already protected by a number of legal instruments.

54. The devastation caused by the recent hurricanes in the region was a sad reminder of the vulnerability of the countries and territories of the Greater Caribbean. Although natural disasters could not be prevented, they could be mitigated through early warning systems, awareness raising, building codes and civil defence strategies, all of which required international aid. If disaster reduction and post-disaster aid were not incorporated into the development plans of the countries of the region, the cycle of destruction would be repeated year after year.

55. The Association of Caribbean States would like to urge the General Assembly to support a text in which human beings were the focus.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.